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HINDI FILM *HOMEBOUND* IS INDIA'S OFFICIAL ENTRY FOR 2026 OSCARS

The film by Neeraj Ghaywan is India's official entry for the 2026 Academy Awards in the Best International Feature category

24 FILMS WERE IN THE RACE TO REPRESENT INDIA

A total of 24 films in different languages were in contention for representing the country at the Oscars, selection committee chairperson N Chandra said. *Homebound* tells story of two childhood friends from a small north Indian village who chase a police job. The film, backed by Martin Scorsese, stars Ishaan Khatter, Vishal Jethwa, and Janhvi Kapoor | P9

HOMEBOUND TO HIT THEATRES ON SEPT 26

- *Stranger Eyes* (Singapore), *Things You Kill* (Canada) and *The Secret Agent* (Brazil) are among others vying to enter the 15-strong shortlist
- Last year, India's entry *Laapataa Ladies* failed to make the cut, leading to the Film Federation of India facing criticism over the choice
- *Homebound* will release in theatres in India on September 26

May 21

WHEN *HOMEBOUND* PREMIERED AT THE 78TH CANNES FILM FESTIVAL IN FRANCE

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Next-Gen
GST
Better & Simpler
APPAREL, FOOTWEAR & PERSONAL CARE
NOW EASY ON MY POCKET
GST SAVINGS
LIFESTYLE AND SAVINGS TOGETHER
APPAREL UP TO ₹2,500 TO BE CHEAPER
FOOTWEAR UP TO ₹2,500 TO SEE A PRICE DROP
SHAMPOO & HAIR OIL TO BE CHEAPER
GYM & SALON SERVICES WILL ALSO GET CHEAPER
भारत सरकार GOVERNMENT OF BHARAT
CBC 15502/13/0018/2526

Not postponing caste survey, will start from Monday: CM

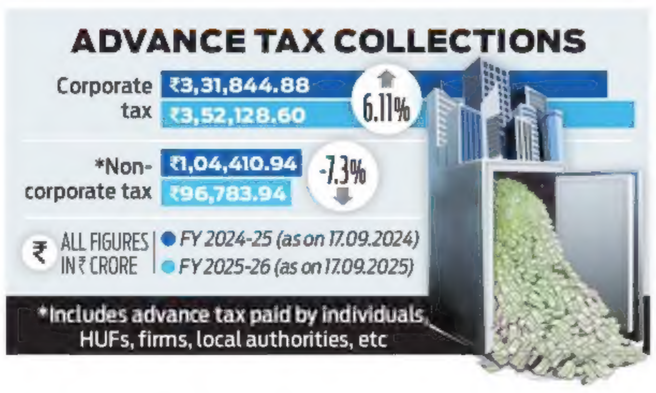
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

EVEN as there is pressure from ruling and opposition party leaders to postpone the Socio-Economic Survey (popularly known as caste survey), which is scheduled to start from Monday, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah categorically said on Friday that it will not be deferred. On top of it, the Department of Backward Classes on Friday issued a government order, stating that the survey will be conducted from September 22 to October 7.

The chief minister said the Backward Classes Commission is a constitutional body and it will take the final decision on conducting the survey. "BJP is politicising the issue and alleging that Congress is anti-Hindu. Ministers should strongly oppose this unitedly," he said.

During the cabinet meeting on Thursday, many ministers expressed their displeasure against the survey and demanded that it be postponed. They objected to suffixing caste names to the religion and addition of new caste names that did not exist earlier.

Meanwhile, Backward Classes Commission Chairman Madhusudan R Naik told *TNIE* that they have neither created any new castes nor deleted any. P4



Corp tax mop-up rises, individual collections drop

Higher income tax exemption limit brings down personal advance tax collections

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

ADVANCE personal income tax collections for FY26 fell 7.3% to ₹96,784 crore as of September 17, compared to ₹1,04,411 crore in the same period last fiscal. The decline is attributed to the higher income tax exemption threshold—raised from ₹7 lakh to ₹12 lakh in this year's Budget—and the revised tax slabs.

In contrast, corporate advance tax collections grew 6.11% to ₹3,52,129 crore. Consequently, total advance tax collections registered a modest 2.9% growth to ₹4,48,913 crore.

"The drop in advance tax collection is primarily because of slab changes, and due to lower tax liabilities for salaried individuals," said Riyaz Thingna, tax partner, Grant Thornton Bharat. He noted that some of the shortfall could be made up by October-end, when individuals with business income file returns and pay self-assessment tax.

Non-corporate advance taxes fell 7% due to tax reliefs

Vivek Jalan, partner, Tax Connect Advisory Services

Despite the dip in advance personal tax, overall direct tax collections remain buoyant. Net direct tax collections (after refunds) rose 9.18% year-on-year to ₹10,82,579 crore, against ₹9,91,512 crore in FY24-25. Net corporate tax collections increased 4.93% to ₹4,72,297 crore, while net personal income tax collections surged 13.67% to ₹5,83,685 crore. Securities transaction tax was largely flat at ₹26,306 crore.

A key driver of this growth was a steep fall in refunds—down 24% to ₹1,60,527 crore from ₹2,10,858 crore last year—reflecting tighter scrutiny of claims and quicker assessments.

"Non-corporate advance taxes have declined by around 7% due to massive tax reliefs in FY26," said Vivek Jalan, partner, Tax Connect Advisory Services. "At the same time, stricter monitoring of deductions and enhanced disclosures in ITRs led to refunds falling to nearly a third of last year's level."

With nominal GDP growth slipping to 8.8% in Q1 from about 10% a year ago, analysts caution that weaker economic momentum could weigh on tax collections, the fiscal deficit, and corporate earnings in the coming quarters.

PRICE WAR VROOMS

MAHINDRA JOINS MARUTI IN PRICE CUTS AFTER GST RATIONALISATION, ADDS BENEFITS TOTALLING ₹2.56 LAKH

ARSHAD KHAN @ New Delhi

PRICE wars among automakers have intensified following the government's decision to slash GST rates. A day after Maruti Suzuki cut prices by up to 24%, leading SUV manufacturer Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) announced revised ex-showroom prices incorporating the GST reduction, along with additional benefits of up to ₹1.29 lakh on its petrol and diesel vehicles.

The combined impact of the GST cut and additional benefits will allow customers to save up to ₹2.56 lakh, M&M said. Bolero Neo leads the line-up with a maximum total benefit of ₹2.56 lakh, comprising a ₹1.27 lakh reduction in ex-showroom price and additional benefits worth ₹1.29 lakh. The popular subcompact SUV, the XUV3XO, follows closely with total savings of ₹2.46 lakh.

Among larger SUV models, the XUV700, Scorpio-N, and Scorpio Classic offer total benefits ranging between ₹1.96 lakh and ₹2.24 lakh. Meanwhile, the Thar and Thar ROXX receive total benefits of ₹1.55 lakh and ₹1.53 lakh, respectively.

The price cut, over and above the GST benefit, is expected to boost competitiveness in the market, giving buyers a wider choice bracket. M&M's pricing moves also reflect carmakers' strategies to retain strong positioning in India's growing SUV segment, especially as the country's largest player, Maruti Suzuki, targets leadership in the high-volume, mid-size SUV space with the launch of its Victoris model.

The additional incentives come at a time when the industry is burdened with high inventory as vehicle sales slowed sharply since mid-August following reports of an overhaul in the GST rate structure.

Puneet Gupta, Director for India and ASEAN Auto Markets at S&P Global Mobility, said the ongoing discounts are a result of the cess component being removed after September 22.

"Cess, which is around 20% for large SUVs, will no longer apply under GST 2.0. However, dealers have already paid this amount and are facing potential losses. To mitigate the impact, they are working with OEMs to offer discounts and clear inventory," he explained. Gupta added Maruti Suzuki's decision to cut prices would fuel sales in the struggling mini car segment as buyers looking to upgrade from two-wheeler to four-wheeler will look to cash in on the discounts.

Fat savings

BOLERO NEO LEADS THE LINE-UP WITH A MAXIMUM TOTAL BENEFIT OF ₹2.56 LAKH

Bolero Neo	₹2.56 L
XUV 3XO	₹2.46 L
XUV 700	₹2.24 L
Scorpio N	₹2.15 L
Scorpio Classic	₹1.96 L
Thar	₹1.55 L
Thar ROXX	₹1.53 L

** SHOWROOM DISCOUNTS + ADDITIONAL BENEFITS*

K-point in India, Canada NSA talks

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

IN a key step towards mending diplomatic ties, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval held bilateral security consultations with his Canadian counterpart Nathalie Drouin in New Delhi on Thursday.

The high-level dialogue comes nearly two years after diplomatic relations between the two nations were rocked by Canadian allegations over the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

The meeting also marked the first major engagement between the two countries' security establishments since both sides appointed new High Commissioners in August, following months of diplomatic chill. Doval and Drouin's meeting is also seen as a follow-up to the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Kananaskis this June.

PART OF REGULAR BILATERAL TALKS

Jaiswal said the NSA-level talks on Thursday were part of regular bilateral security consultation with Canada. The officials also followed up on discussions between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Canadian PM Mark Carney on the sidelines of G7 in Alberta, Canada in June this year

Responsibility to ensure security of Indian diplomatic premises lies with the host government

Randhir Jaiswal

"This is part of the regular bilateral security consultations that happen between the two countries," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a media briefing on Friday.

The talks took place against the backdrop of renewed threats from the US-based Khalistani outfit Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), which announced a "siege" outside the Indian Consulate in Vancouver on September 18. The group circulated threatening posters targeting India's new High Commissioner to Canada, Dinesh Patnaik, sparking fresh concerns.

"As and when there is a concern, we do take it up with the concerned side, in this case Canada, to ensure there is adequate security for our diplomatic premises," Jaiswal said

SFJ's announcement coincided with the anniversary of former Canadian premier Justin Trudeau's explosive statement in September 2023, where he alleged that Indian agents may have been involved in Nijjar's killing—a charge strongly and consistently refuted by India. Nijjar, a designated terrorist by India, was gunned down outside a gurdwara in British Columbia on June 18, 2023.

Indian officials used Thursday's talks to raise concerns over the safety of their diplomats and premises in Canada, the activities of pro-Khalistan elements operating from Canadian soil, and long-pending extradition requests. Canadian authorities, in turn, flagged their own worries over transnational criminal networks with links to India, sources said.

Hydrogen fuel to power upper stage rocket of 1st manned moon mission

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is working on developing a hydrogen fuel-propelled upper stage rocket of 60-70 tonnes capacity for launching India's first manned moon mission, aimed at being undertaken by 2040.

ISRO Chairman V Narayanan said this on Friday on the sidelines of a national workshop on "Hydrogen Fuel Technologies and Future Trends", held at Alliance University, Bengaluru, in association with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc). In his address at the workshop, he said the world today faced twin challenges of growing demand for energy and the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"In this context, hydrogen, one of the greenest and cleanest fuels available to us, is a beacon of hope. It remains key in many of our breakthroughs at ISRO," he said, adding that in January this year, India launched the GSLV MkIII rocket – its 100th successful mission – and it was powered by a cryogenic stage using liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen, "a technology once denied to India but now mastered by the country".

CONTINUED ON P2

NORTHEAST'S OWN

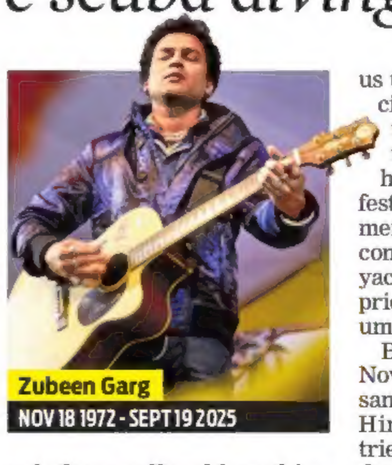
Zubeen Garg of 'Ya Ali' fame dies in Singapore scuba diving accident

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

ZUBEEN Garg, the 52-year-old cultural icon of Assam and a heartthrob of the younger generation, passed away on Friday in Singapore, leaving behind a rich legacy.

Known for his superlative rendition of 'Ya Ali' and countless other hits, Garg remained a multifaceted talent — a singer-songwriter, composer, lyricist, music director, actor, film producer, director, screenwriter, and philanthropist — who captured hearts across Assam, Bengal, and beyond.

While in Singapore to attend the 4th Northeast India Festival, Garg suffered breathing difficulties during a private scuba diving excursion not linked to the festival.



"We received a call from Zubeen's manager informing us that he had met with an accident and had been rushed to Singapore General Hospital," said Shyamkanu Mahanta, chief organiser of the festival. "We learned that a few members of the local Assamese community had taken him on a yacht visit, of which we had no prior knowledge. This is a monumental loss," he said.

Born Zubeen Borthakur on November 18, 1972, Garg mostly sang in Assamese, Bengali and Hindi-film and music industries. He is survived by his wife Garima Saikia, a fashion designer.

"Shocked ...Zubeen Garg will be remembered for his rich contribution to music," PM Narendra Modi posted on X.

SC rejects plea, Banu can inaugurate Dasara festival

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Friday rejected an appeal, challenging the Karnataka High Court's order not to interfere with the state government's decision to invite International Booker Prize-winning author Banu Mushtaq to inaugurate Dasara festivities in Mysuru.

During the hearing, the two-judge apex court bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta asked the petitioner, HS Gaurav, what was the purpose of the plea. Gaurvav's lawyer replied that Mushtaq's invitation affected his rights under Article 25 of the Constitution. He stated that the Preamble states secularism, but it should not interfere with his religious activities.

Rejecting his petition, the top court said, "This is a state programme. How can the state distinguish between A, B and C?"

But the lawyer pleaded that the puja inside a temple is not a secular act. "Statements have been made which according to us are against our religion. Under these circumstances, you can't invite such people," he pleaded.

Gaurav moved the top court on Thursday. His petition claimed that Mushtaq's participation would hurt the sentiments of people as she had made "anti-Hindu" statements in the past. P4